

life. Quite apart from actual analysis, I have reason to believe that a certain measure of freedom to joke naturally about bodily processes or even, as we saw in 'the *Records*, to play at having a lavatory or a " potty " in the make-believe house or ship, is helpful to little children. Children under five do need greater verbal freedom in these matters than it is useful for older children to have. Again, I would suggest that the best way of dealing with the children's wish to chant " Birn-bom-bee-wee thing" or their occasional, somewhat defiant references to excretory processes, is not to prohibit or reproach directly, but to allow the fact that the adult does not join in these particular activities to have its unostentatious effect, and to rely on the positive attraction of other interests. With the child over, say, four-and-a-half or five (I do not, however, mean to suggest any rigid age demarcation), who has attained a greater measure of emotional self-reliance and security of ego-development, one can make more definite requests that jokes or songs about these things should not be indulged in.

Children of over five are quite well aware that the general adult world does not condone such pleasantries on their part, and if they are left free, in any special place or atmosphere, to say what they like with adults present, they fail to understand why the adult in question thus indulges them. I am far from suggesting that we should totally forbid joking references to these things, or show marked disapproval. But it is a help to the child if we are on the side of a reasonable conformity to the general public standards in these matters ; otherwise, again, we become " bad " to the child and fail to support him against his own guilt. The risk of prohibiting all references to sexual or excretory affairs,

whether serious
or joking, is that it leaves the child to battle
alone with his
curiosities and ponderings about these
matters, and gives
his social relation with the educator a feeling
of unreality.
The child needs the support of our unafraidness
in these
difficulties, just as much as he needs our skill in
imparting
knowledge about the physical world or the
realm of art and
literature.

The part of the educator here, as elsewhere,
should be to
stand for sense and perspective. He has to
avoid the snare
of a priggishness that is out of touch with
physiological
realities, on the one hand, and the pitfall of
a licence